

Tompkins County Council of Governments

Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 16, 2010 3:00 PM

Scott Heyman Conference Room

Approved

Members Present: (12 municipalities)

T/Caroline – D. Barber, D. Frongillo	V/Groton – B. Conger
T/Danby – R. Dietrich	C/Ithaca – C. Peterson
T/Enfield – R. Barriere	Co./Tompkins – M. Robertson
T/Ulysses – R. Marino	V/Trumansburg – D. Nottke
T/Newfield – R. Driscoll	T/Ithaca – H. Engman
V/Lansing – D. Hartill	V/Cayuga Heights – K. Supron

Municipalities Not in Attendance: (5 municipalities) V/Dryden, T/Dryden, V/Freeville, T/Lansing, T/Groton

Guests: J. Mareane, County Administration

Staff: M. Pottorff, Legislature Office

Call to Order

Mr. Barber called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m.

Changes to the Agenda

There was no agenda for this meeting. The floor was left open to discuss accomplishments in 2010 and goals for the upcoming year.

Approval of Minutes – November 18, 2010

It was MOVED by Mr. Dietrich, seconded by Mr. Barriere, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the minutes of November 18, 2010 as submitted. MINUTES APPROVED.

Chair's Report – Review of 2010 and Areas to Focus on in 2011

Mr. Barber reported he attended an award banquet for Sustainability Tompkins and TCCOG received recognition for the Health Insurance Consortium. He highlighted some of the items that members have worked on together over the last year, including the cell tower initiative, dog control, gas drilling, and the Health Insurance Consortium (with lives being covered effective Jan. 1, 2011).

Cell Tower Update

Ms. Robertson said a contract has been signed for the cell tower initiative. She said Dan Hoffman, City Attorney, will be contacting involved municipalities to set up a date for a presentation. It was recommended that the chief elected official be contacted; it was suggested that information also be circulated to any staff or board members who are also interested. Involved municipalities include: Towns of Danby, Dryden, Enfield, Ulysses, Ithaca, City of Ithaca, and the County. Mr. Hartill and Mr. Driscoll said they will bring this up again with their town boards.

A question was raised as to whether there are plans within the City to construct a cell tower. Ms. Peterson said Verizon had contacted the City in the past but never submitted an application. Recently, Verizon contacted Dan Hoffman, City of Ithaca Attorney, and said they would not be submitting an application because Crown Communications is putting up a tower on the State DOT (Department of Transportation) site and they plan to co-locate on that tower. Ms. Peterson said there has been no

communication between the State and City about this and she has been contacting various parties to obtain additional information.

Mr. Barber reported on a grant that was applied for and received for the Health Insurance Consortium that now has approximately \$100,000 of funds that were not used. These funds were going to be used for a wellness program; however, the State will not approve that use but will allow the Consortium to use the funds to go towards meeting the reserve requirement.

Gas Drilling

Mr. Barber spoke of the public hearing TCCOG sponsored on gas drilling. There has been a lot of work done on the issue of gas drilling. He credited Elizabeth Thomas, Chair of the Gas Drilling Task Force, for the amount of time and effort she has put into this issue. He reported he, Mr. Driscoll and Ms. Thomas, toured a drill site in Towanda, PA. He said they met with the town supervisor, a county commissioner, and their Director of Economic Development. One thing Mr. Barber said he took away from the meeting was that they were unprepared for the drilling and struggle to deal with issues that arise. They complimented Tompkins County for taking the initiative to plan in advance of drilling activity. Mr. Driscoll and Mr. Barber described how the area has transformed into an industrial zone since drilling began and said officials are still in a reactive posture. He said their task force has membership on it Tompkins County's should consider, such as a person representing an office similar to TCAD, farm community, sportsmen, and other sectors in the community that will be impacted by drilling. He said they are very earnest but extremely overwhelmed.

Mr. Driscoll spoke of emergency services and said there are 45 minutes to one hour delays in responding to calls. There are so many calls that are handled by volunteers and it is unreasonable to expect these volunteers to leave their employment multiple times each day. Mr. Driscoll spoke of increased Probation services and said ten percent of the people who are on Probation are from out of state and from drilling states.

Mr. Barber said there is no ability for local governments to receive revenue from the gas that is extracted; the only revenue received is from the increased business activity. They pay no property tax and there is no severance tax in Pennsylvania. Mr. Driscoll also said DSS (Department of Social Services) is unable to place foster children because housing has become so scarce.

Mr. Barber said they were at a drilling facility and did not have an opportunity to visit a fracking site; Sharon Anderson will be arranging a visit to hydrofracking site if members are interested. Mr. Barber will ask Sharon Anderson to produce a list of notes from the tour and meeting.

Ms. Robertson asked if there was any discussion with property owners and Mr. Barber said there was not enough time. Mr. Driscoll said there is a level of resentment that is beginning to show itself between those who have leases and those who do not. There has been a complete change in the way of life and the beginning of a social class division. He said the number of people who have left their regular jobs to take a job with the gas drilling industry has affected town government, county government, and they cannot get people to fill those vacant positions. Ms. Robertson extended an invitation to TCCOG members to attend a Legislature meeting to talk about these concerns.

Emergency Management

Mr. Dietrich said the stand the County has taken with emergency management is a real turnaround from where things were a short time ago. He said part of what is coming out of gas-related emergencies is the distinct possibility of towns having to do mutual response. Because of the potential volume of calls there will have to be some brainstorming as to what the responsibilities of municipalities will be. Mr. Dietrich said there are guidelines that come down from the State that must be followed in order for municipalities to be eligible to receive FEMA (Federal Emergency Management) monies. He

strongly encouraged municipal leaders to have discussions with their boards. It will be important for the municipality and its highway and fire departments to work together on a municipal plan that can aligns with the County's plan. Mr. Dietrich also said it will be important that town clerks be the central person in each town to manage the concept of emergency management.

Youth Services

Mr. Dietrich said some municipalities have approached Cooperative Extension to explore what it would cost for that agency to provide youth services to municipalities. He believes TCCOG will need to take the lead next year in trying to come up with an overall plan for delivering and paying for municipal youth services. Mr. Dietrich said the Town of Danby has created a Youth Commission in an effort to bring everyone together to provide input into the process.

Redistricting

Ms. Robertson said the County redistricting process will begin next year and noted it will affect the City because of ward and district boundary lines. She noted it does not have to be done for the 2011 elections but in time for the next election of Legislators. She said although the Legislature has to set parameters and ultimately will approve the plan, she believes there is consensus to establish an independent group that will look at the Census data. Mr. Barber said this will be a good opportunity for everyone to work together.

"Judge Shopping"

Mr. Driscoll said there are times when arresting officers write a ticket to a judge within a town or village who they know is tougher than another. He said this becomes a partisan issue in the Town of Newfield and creates conflict every year at budget time. Mr. Driscoll said there needs to be discussions with the Sheriff and the head of the State Police and there needs to be a fair formula for assigning judges. Mr. Dietrich said he thinks the basis by which judges are assigned in the Town of Danby is due to availability. Mr. Hartill suggested having one full-time judge to cover all municipalities; Mr. Barber said this was explored years ago by Tim Joseph, former Legislator. He looked into having a set of judges that would be available at all times throughout the County.

Ms. Robertson suggested the following topics for discussion in 2011:

- Economic Development – discussion of ways TCAD could better serve all the municipalities;
- Discussion of how the sales tax distribution is working; and
- Sustainability and shared staff

Report from Nominating Subcommittee

Mr. Driscoll said the Subcommittee discussed how challenging it has been over the last few years to fill vacancies and it may make sense to have a discussion of succession planning for the leadership of this body. The subcommittee is recommending that beginning in 2011 that TCCOG adopt a co-chair model with a Vice Chair. Mr. Driscoll said Mr. Barber would be asked if he would serve as Co-Chair to assist another Co-Chair, and in 2012 the Vice Chair would become a Co-Chair and a new member would become Vice Chair. He said this would solve the problem of trying to find someone at the end of each year to lead the group and all members should assume they will step into a leadership position for TCCOG at some point.

There was support for this concept. Mr. Driscoll will work with staff to provide a proposal to amend the bylaws at the next meeting. He asked that anyone interested in making a nomination to these positions let him, Ms. Supron, or Ms. Nottke know.

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Next Agenda Items

The following items were suggested for inclusion on the next agenda:

Amendment of bylaws;
Emerald Ash Borer update;
Health Insurance Consortium update

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, TC Legislature Office